

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BELGRA 04603 01 OF 02 081934Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----109954 081937Z /42
O 081820Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1419

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BELGRADE 4603

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS YO ET US
SUBJECT: YUGOSLAV TRANSFER OF M-47 TANKS TO ETHIOPIA

REF: STATE 158579

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: FOREIGN SECRETARY MINIC ACKNOWLEDGES
DIVDGSION OF M-47 TANKS TO ETHIOPIA, URGES USG TO
UNDERSTAND CONDITIONS WHICH LED CERTAIN OFFICIALS TO
"FREELY" INTERPRET OLD AGREEMENTS AS THEY APPLIED TO
OUTDATED TANKS, "HUNDREDS" OF WHICH GOY HAD ALREADY TURNED
INTO SCRAP, AND PLEADS THAT THIS CASE NOT BE "DRAMATIZED"
AND ALLOWED TO WORSEN OUR RELATIONS. AS SOLUTION, MINIC
URGES USG NOW ACCEPT PROPOSAL GOY MADE IN 1974 TO ASST.
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ELLSWORTH THAT OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS
GET TOGETHER TO CLARIFY YUGOSLAV OBLIGATIONS ON
OUTSTANDING U.S. SUPPLIED MILITARY EQUIPMENT. AMBASSADOR
RESPONDED BY READING TALKING POINTS SUPPLIED REFTEL,
UNDERLINING FACT 1951 AND 1959 AGREEMENTS STILL IN EFFECT
AND PROFOUND SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH WE VIEW THIS
MATTER. OUR VIEWS ON WHERE WE GO FROM HERE FOLLOW
SEPTTEL. END SUMMARY.

2. FONSEC MINIC RECEIVED ME JULY 8TH TO RESPOND TO
MY DEMARCHE ONNKDIVERSION OF M-47 TANKS TO ETHIOPIA.

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HE BEGAN BY STATING THAT OUR INFORMATION WAS ON THE
WHOLE EXACT. IN MAY THE GOY HAD SUPPLIED ETHIOPIA
WITH A VARIETY OF WEAPONS OF YUGOSLAV AND SOVIET
PRODUCTION, BUT ALSO A CERTAIN NUMBER OF AMERICAN
M-47 PATTON TANKS(MINIC LATER RESPONDED TO MY QUESTION
ABOUT NUMBER INVOLVED BY STATING THAT THERE WERE 70). WHEN HE HAD
INQUIRED HOW AND WHY THIS HAD HAPPENED, HE LEARNED THAT

"EXECUTIVE BODIES" HAD GIVEN A FREER, MORE LIBERAL INTERPRETATION TO 1951 AND 1959 AGREEMENTS. THIS

INTERPRETATION WAS RESULT OF LONG PERIOD ELAPSED SINCE AGREEMENTS REACHED AND COMPLETE OBSOLESCENCE OF TANKS THEMSELVES. FOR A LONG TIME THE YUGOSLAV ARMY HAD EXCLUDED THE M-47 FROM ITS OWN USE AND ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS HAD SENT "HUNDREDS" TO FOUNDARIES TO MAKE SCRAP. THE TANKS SENT TO ETHIOPIA WERE IN FACT BEING READIED FOR SAME FATE. IT WAS EXCLUSIVELY FOR REASON TANKS ABOUT TO BE ELIMINATED ANYWAY THAT YUGOSLAV MILITARY APPLIED 1951 AND 1959 AGREEMENTS MORE LIBERALLY THAN THEY OTHERWISE SHOULD BE INTERPRETED.

3. MINIC CONTINUED THAT GOY HAD PROPOSED TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY ELLSWORTH IN 1974 THAT TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE TALKS TO CLARIFY AND END OBLIGATIONS ARISING FROM 1959 AGREEMENT. (OUR RECORDS SHOW THAT YUGOSLAVS DID RAISE PROBLEMS THEY FACED IN DISPOSING OF OLD EQUIPMENT AND OF OBTAINING SPARE PARTS WITH ELLSWORTH.) NO DISCUSSIONS RESULTED. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS OVER LAST 26 YEARS THEY HAD ASKED FORN3)8;346 9* 0-43 0-45 *94 7.S. SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT WITHOUT SUCCESS. ALL THESE CIRCUMSTANCES HAD LED TO THIS INTERPRETATION OF
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A VERY OLD AGREEMENT AND WITH WEAPONS ALREADY EXCLUDED FROM INVENTORY. NOW IT IS INDISPENSABLE TO CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT WHICH WILL PREVENT SUCH CASES FROM ARISING AGAIN, CASES WHICH THE GOY DOES NOT WANT AND WHICH CAN BE AVOIDED BY PUTTING AND END TO ALL OBLIGATIONS DERIVING FROM THE 1951 AGREEMENT. MINIC PROPOSED THAT MILITARY AUTHORITIES OF TWO COUNTRIES ESTABLISH DIRECT CONTACT TO CLARIFY A SITUATION WHICH ARISES FROM OUT-DATED AND LITTLE USED AGREEMENTS.

4. MINIC STRESSED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO OTHER DIFFICULTIES IN US-YUGOSLAV MILITARY COOPERATION, THAT THEY WERE IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH ALL AGREEMENTS, THAT THIS WAS FIRST TIME A CASE OF THIS KIND HAD HAPPENED, AND THAT GOY HAD NOT WANTED IT TO OCCUR. YUGOSLAVIA IS READY, DETERMINED AND WILL IN FUTURE

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----110252 082004Z /61

O 081820Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1420

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BELGRADE 4603

EXDIS

OBSERVE ALL OBLIGATIONS, AS THEY HAVE DONE IN THE PAST.

5. IN CONCLUDING FORMAL PRESENTATION (WHICH HE WAS
LARGELY READING), MINIC APPEALED FOR USG'S UNDERSTANDING,
EXPRESSED STRONG HOPE WE WOULD NOT GIVE THIS MATTER AN
IMPORTANCE IT DOES NOT DESERVE AND NOT ALLOW IT TO HAVE
A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON ALL FIELDS, INCLUDING MILITARY
COOPERATION.

6. I RESPONDED BY STATING THAT MY GOVERNMENT HAD
INSTRUCTED ME TO MAKE FOUR POINTS, WHICH I THEN
PROCEEDED TO READ PER REF A. I ADDED THAT 1951
AND 1959 AGREEMENTS WERE CLEARLY STILL VALID AND MUST
CONTINUE TO APPLY. I EMPHASIZED THE PROFOUND CONCERN
WITH WHICH WE VIEW THIS DIRECT VIOLATION OF BILATERAL

ACCORDS AND STATED THAT I COULD NOT SAY WHAT THE
CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP WOULD BE.

7. IN RESPONSE TO MY ENQUIRY WHETHER I HAD UNDERSTOOD
CORRECTLY THAT HE WAS COMMITTING GOY NOT TO REPEAT
THIS VIOLATION, MINIC STATED THAT I SHOULD CONVEY HIS
REMARKS IN THE MOST PRECISE MANNER POSSIBLE, THAT HE
WAS CONFIDENT WE WOULD UNDERSTAND THE CONDITIONS WHICH HAD
LED TO THIS SPECIFIC SITUATION AND THAT YUGOSLAVIA WAS

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KNOWN FOR ITS STRICT COMPLIANCE WITH ALL ITS OBLIGATIONS.
HE URGED THAT WE NOT ALLOW A BUNCH OF OLD IRON FIT ONLY
FOR A MILITARY MUSEUM TO SPOIL OUR RELATIONS. HE CONVINCED
THAT YUGOSLAV MILITARY HAD TOLD ETHIOPIANS THIS MATERIAL
ABOUT TO BE THROWN OUT BUT THAT AS THEY LARGELY ARMED WITH

U.S. WEAPONS MAYBE THEY COULD USE IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. HE APPEALED FOR THE ADMINISTRATION TO RE-EXAMINE ITS DECISION TO INFORM THE CONGRESS, THAT THIS WAS A MATTER WHICH DID NOT DESERVE TO BE DRAMATIZED, THE MORE SO AS THE GOY WAS THINKING VERY SERIOUSLY ABOUT INCREASED MILITARY COOPERATION IN THE FUTURE. IT IS NOT IN THE INTEREST OF EITHER SIDE TO LET A 26 YEAR OLD AGREEMENT WHICH IN ANY CASE NEEDS UPDATING TO SPOIL THE PRESENT. WHAT YUGOSLAVIA WAS VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT AND ABSOLUTELY COULD NOT ACCEPT WAS THAT THIS ONE CASE WOULD HAVE AN IMPACT ON U.S.G'S ESTIMATION OF THE GOY'S DETERMINATION TO FULFILL ALL THE AGREEMENTS IT HAS SIGNED. THIS WOULD BE THE MOST DAMAGING CONSEQUENCE OF ALL AND AN OVER-ESTIMATION AND DRAMATIZATION OF THIS CASE. MUTUAL TRUST WAS ESSENTIAL. THERE MANY AGREEMENTS BETWEEN US AND ALL WILL BE STRICTLY APPLIED BY THE GOY.

8. I STATED THAT I APPRECIATED HIS LAST WORDS, I

WOULD OF COURSE REPORT HIS REQUEST THAT WE RE-EXAMINE THE NEED TO REPORT TO CONGRESS, BUT IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THERE WAS NO DISCRETION IN SUCH CASES. I WOULD ALSO PASS ON HIS REQUEST TO HOLD DISCUSSIONS TO CLARIFY THE STATUS OF THE AGREEMENTS BUT THAT I COULD ONLY WISH WE COULD HAVE HAD SUCH TALKS WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF THIS IMMEDIATE MATTER. I HAD READ TO HIM
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SECTION 2D OF THE 1959 AGREEMENT WHICH EVEN SPECIFIES THAT FURTHER DISPOSITION OF SALVAGE OR SCRAP BE NOTIFIED AND APPROVED BY THE USG. MINIC RESPONDED BY AGAIN APPEALING FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING AND FOR TALKS. HE CHARACTERIZED THIS AS A TYPICAL CASE OF AGREEMENTS IN WHICH EROSION OCCURS BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT USED. HE EXPRESSED BELIEF OFFICIALS CONCERNED ONLY EXAMINED AGREEMENTS CAREFULLY AFTER OUR DEMARCHE.

9. COMMENT: BOTH DURING DISCUSSION OF TANK DIVERSION AND DEMARCHE WHICH FOLLOWED ON GROWING TERRORIST THREAT TO YUGOSLAVS IN THE U.S. AND SENATE PASSAGE OF MIHAJLOVIC STATUE BILL (SEE SEPTTEL), MINIC MAKING APPARENT EFFORT TO KEEP DAMAGE TO US-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS TO MINIMUM. BUT AFTER UPSWING IN OUR RELATIONS OVER THE SPRING, IT APPEARS WE ARE IN FOR LONG HOT SUMMER WITH EMOTIONAL, DIFFICULT PROBLEMS ARISING ALMOST DAILY. NEVERTHELESS, WE OBVIOUSLY CANNOT SIMPLY CARRY ON WITH BUSINESS AS USUAL AFTER THE DIVERSION OF SEVENTY TANKS. MY VIEWS ON WHERE WE GO FROM HERE IN THE AREA MOST DIRECTLY

CONCERNED, THAT OF MILITARY COOPERATION, FOLLOW.
EAGLEBURGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE, TANKS (COMBAT VEHICLES)
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 08-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BELGRA04603
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770243-0661
Format: TEL
From: BELGRADE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770779/aaaacqxe.tel
Line Count: 226
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 68e9146f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 158579
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 09-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1927218
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: YUGOSLAV TRANSFER OF M-47 TANKS TO ETHIOPIA
TAGS: MASS, YO, ET, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/68e9146f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009